

## ***Vermont Health Care Privacy Policy***

Vermont Health Care takes your privacy seriously. Privacy protection and confidentiality of health information is essential for quality health care and we are committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the information we handle about you.

This policy explains:

- how we collect, store, use and disclose your personal information;
- how you may access your personal information;
- how we protect the quality and security of your personal information;
- how you may seek correction of any personal information we hold; and
- how you may make a complaint about our handling of your personal information.

In addition to our professional and ethical obligations, at a minimum, our Practice handles your personal information in accordance with federal and state privacy law. This includes complying with the federal Australian Privacy Principles (**APPs**) forming part of the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* and the Victorian Health Privacy Principles (**HPPs**) forming part of the *Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*.

More information about the APPs and HPPs can be found on the Australian Information Commissioner's website [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au) or in hard copy on request from our Practice reception.

### **Collection of information**

The Practice collects and holds personal information about you so that we may properly assess, diagnose, treat and be proactive in your health care needs.

The type of personal information we collect may include:

- personal details (including name, address, date of birth, Medicare number and where appropriate ethnic and cultural background);
- your medical history;
- notes made during the course of a medical consultation;
- referral to other health services providers;
- results and reports received from other health service providers; and
- credit card or direct debit information for billing purposes.

Wherever practicable we will collect this information from you personally - either at the Practice, over the phone, via written correspondence or via internet if you transact with us online.

In some instances we may need to collect information about you from other sources such as referring doctors, treating specialists, pathology, radiology, hospitals or other health care providers.

In an emergency, we may collect information from your immediate family, friends or carers.

### **Use and disclosure**

Your personal information will only be used or disclosed for purposes directly related to providing you with quality health care, or in ways you would reasonably expect us to use it in order to provide you with this service.

This includes use or disclosure:

- to the professional team directly involved in your health care, including treating doctors, pathology services, radiology services and other specialists outside this medical practice. For example, this may occur through referral to other doctors when requesting medical tests or in the report or result returned to us following the referrals;
- to the Practice's administrative staff for billing and other administrative tasks necessary to run our practice. Our staff are trained in the handling of personal information in accordance with this Policy.

- to your health insurance fund, Medicare or other organisations responsible for the financial aspects of your care;
- where required by law, for example, pursuant to a subpoena;
- to insurers or lawyers for the defence of a medical claim; and/or
- to assist with training and education of the health care professionals who at that time form part of our clinical team.

Our practice does not intend to disclose your personal information to overseas recipients.

### **Information Quality**

We aim to ensure the information we hold about you is accurate, complete, up to date and relevant. To this end our staff may ask you to confirm that your personal details are correct when you attend a consultation. Please let us know if any of the information we hold about you is incorrect or not up to date.

### **Storage**

Our Practice takes all reasonable steps to protect the security of the personal information we hold, by:

- securing our premises;
- using passwords on all electronic systems and databases and varying access levels to protect electronic information from unauthorised interference, access, modification or disclosure; and
- storing hard copy records in secure filing cabinets or rooms that are accessible only to Practice staff.

### **Access to your personal information**

Under law you have a right to access personal information we hold about you. Please contact our Practice Privacy Officer for more information on our *Access to Medical Records Policy*.

We ask that you put your request in writing. A fee for the retrieval and copying of your medical record will apply, charged in accordance with the schedule of fees specified in the *Health Records Regulations 2008* (Vic), plus GST. This fee is not redeemable through Medicare.

### **Amendment of your personal information**

If you consider the information we hold about you is not correct, please contact the Practice in writing. You have the right to have any incorrect information corrected.

### **What happens if you choose to withhold your personal information?**

You are not obliged to give us your personal information. However, if you choose not to provide the Practice with the personal details requested, it may limit our ability to provide you with the service you need. We encourage you to discuss your concerns with our reception staff prior to your first consultation or with your doctor.

### **What about use of personal information for direct marketing?**

Australian privacy law limits the use of personal information for direct marketing of goods and services. We do not use your personal information for direct marketing.

### **What should I do if I have a privacy complaint?**

If you have a complaint regarding the way your personal information has been handled by our Practice, please put it in writing and address it to the practice privacy officer. We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 14 days, and endeavour to provide a full response within 30 days of receipt.

Should you be dissatisfied with our response, you may lodge your written complaint with the Victorian Privacy Commissioner at <https://www.privacy.vic.gov.au> and/or the Victorian Health Services Commissioner at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au>.

If you have a query regarding our Practice's privacy policy, please contact our practice privacy officer who will be happy to discuss the matter with you.